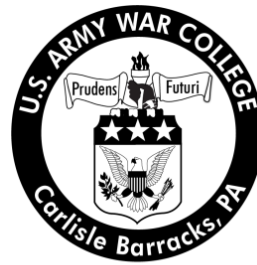# Strategy Research Project

The War Against Al-Qa'ida: Post-Iraq and Afghanistan

by

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In order to meet the terrorism challenges of the next decade, as well as achieve its national security objectives and interest, the United States must develop a robust interagency Counterterrorism Task Force that integrates all forms of intelligence and fuses with both an operational and diplomatic arm in order to effectively execute the war against al-Qa'ida post-withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the end of two conflicts, the U.S. remains at war with the non-state actor al-Qa'ida, and its defeat remains one of the U.S. top national objectives. This paper will analyze three options of how the country will achieve its National Objective, the disruption, dismantling and defeat of al-Qa'ida and its affiliates: Option 1 – Status Quo is the United States current counterterrorism structure; Option 2 – Department of Defense Lead; Option 3 – National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) Lead. The FAS test (Feasibility, Acceptability, and Suitability) was used to analyze and compare each option. This paper recommends the NCTC lead, which is a significant shift in the way our government conducts the counterterrorism fight but will provide the unity of command and effort required to achieve the whole-of-government approach to defeat al-Qa'ida.

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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THE WAR AGAINST AL-QA'IDA: POST-IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

> Our terrorist adversaries [al-Qa'ida] have shown themselves to be agile and adaptive; defeating them requires that we develop and pursue a strategy that is even more agile and adaptive.
>
> —President Barack Obama
> National Strategy for Counterterrorism[1]

Just prior to the 10th Anniversary of Al-Qa'ida's terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, President Barack Obama published the National Strategy for Counterterrorism. In this strategy, the President affirmed, with the death of Osama Bin Laden, that the United States was at a critical junction in its war against Al-Qa'ida. He said, "In the past two and half years, we have eliminated more key al-Qa'ida leaders in rapid succession than at any time…. As a result, we now have the opportunity to seize a turning point in our effort to disrupt, dismantle and ultimately defeat al-Qa'ida."[2] In both the National Security Strategy and National Strategy for Counterterrorism, the President clearly stated his and the government's number one interest was the protection of the American people; critical to achieving this interest was the end state of defeating the terrorist organization of al-Qa'ida. The president goes on to say, "Success requires a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign that judiciously applies every tool of American power—both military and civilian—as well as the concerted efforts of like minded states and multilateral institutions."[3] What the president is implying to the United States Government, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations is that they collectively need to develop a new synergistic approach to adequately address this continuously growing and adapting threat.

Throughout history and especially the beginning of the 21st Century, terrorist groups have demonstrated increasing abilities to adapt to counterterrorism measures and political failure. Terrorists are developing new capabilities of attack and improving the efficiency of existing methods. Additionally, terrorist groups have shown significant progress in escaping a subordinate role in nation-state conflicts and becoming prominent as international influences in their own right. They are becoming more integrated with other sub-state entities such as criminal organizations and legitimately chartered corporations and are gradually assuming a measure of control and identity with national governments.

According to the National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC) - Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), terrorist organizations continue to export and employ their methods throughout the international system. The WITS has documented each attack in its data base by country of origin, type of attack, number of casualties, etc. Since 2006, worldwide terrorist attacks (excluding Iraq) have increased almost 15%, and, more importantly, the number of deaths as a result of these attacks has increased almost 36%. The trend is alarming in that terrorism as a method not only continues to rise, but that it is becoming increasingly more effective in the number of casualties each attack inflicts. In 2010 alone over 11,500 terrorist attacks occurred in 72 countries, resulting in approximately 50,000 victims, including 13,200 deaths.[4]

Throughout the last decade, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) has continued to tear down the bureaucratic walls of the interagency in order to develop an effective network that could match the pace, adaptability, and flexibility of the growing al-Qa'ida, Sunni/Shia extremist, and Taliban insurgent networks. JSOC built a global

interagency network that stretched from South Asia to Iraq, through the Arabian Peninsula, from Africa to Europe and back to the United States in order to produce an "unblinking eye" on al-Qa'ida, which enabled it to detect, decide, and act faster than the enemy. Critical to the success of this network was the fusion of intelligence with operations that enabled JSOC operators to act at unprecedented pace in combat. In his article in *Foreign Policy* and as reported in *The New York Times*, General Stanley McChrystal, former JSOC commander, described the JSOC counterterrorism network as "a true network [that] starts with robust communications connectivity, but also leverages physical and cultural proximity, shared purpose, established decision-making processes, personal relationships, and trust. Ultimately, a network is defined by how well it allows its members to see, decide, and effectively act."[5]

The former Global War on Terror (GWOT) foreign policy was often criticized for being too indiscriminate and ambitious. This led to much criticism of the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq, as pointed out by Jeffery Record in his Strategic Studies Institutes monograph: "The war against Iraq was a detour from, not an integral component of, the war on terrorism; in fact, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM may have expanded the terrorist threat by establishing a large new American target set in an Arab heartland."[6] The current administration's change of the U.S. counterterrorism narrative from a GWOT to the United States war against al-Qa'ida has not only focused our national security strategy but also legitimized our fight against al-Qa'ida, and presents the U.S. Government with an opportunity to build an effective and integrated counterterrorism network that will, in fact, achieve the desired strategic objectives as outlined in our National Security Strategy and National Strategy for Counterterrorism.

The expansion of al-Qa'ida's network, its adaptability, its resiliency, and the expansion of its ideology remain a growing concern of the United States. Every element of government recognizes our war against al-Qa'ida will not end when our last troop boards a plane in Bagram. Therefore, the question remains: What does the U.S. counterterrorism network look like in 2016, given the lessons learned over ten years of combat, and what is needed to ensure the United States doesn't return to the bureaucratic stove-piped intelligence failures of the past?

History

A central lesson Congress and the Executive Branch drew from the 9/11 attacks was that there had been inadequate interagency coordination, partially as a result of separate statutory missions and administrative barriers. A series of investigative and legislative initiatives followed. First, the Homeland Security Act (P.L. 107-296), enacted on November 25, 2002, created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and empowered the agency to specifically integrate the national intelligence community for the Global War on Terror. As a result, DHS envisioned accomplishing this monumental task through the creation of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC). The TTIC met continued resistance from the start from other national intelligence departments and agencies and was very ineffective. In August 2004, shortly after publication of the 9/11 Commission Report, President Bush issued Executive Order 13354, based on constitutional and statutory authorities, which established the National Counterterrorism Center as a follow-up to TTIC. The NCTC was to serve as the primary organization of the Federal Government for analyzing and integrating all intelligence possessed or acquired pertaining to terrorism or counterterrorism. The NCTC would not just have the

analytical responsibilities TTIC had possessed, but because of the Intelligence Reform

Act and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, the NCTC was specifically tasked with

undertaking strategic operational planning for counterterrorism operations. Given that

colossal task and the immaturity of the organization, it is fairly easy to understand why

critics have often questioned the creation of the NCTC and been skeptical of its

purpose. Then why recommend the NCTC to lead our nation's effort in the longest war

to date…the war against al-Qa'ida? To better understand this question and the problem

facing our nation, one first needs to understand the nature of the enemy al-Qa'ida and

its terrorist network.[7]

Since the 9/11 attacks, Bin Laden's role as the head of al-Qa'ida faded from an

operational senior strategic leader to more of a spiritual figurehead within the global

jihadist movement. In fact, Bin Laden spent the last decade on the run following the

U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent operations in the long-time mujahedeen

hideout of Tora Bora. That said, his fugitive status only helped his cause, and although

this isolated him as a leader, it did not render the network ineffective. Instead, according

to *Wall Street Journal* contributors Margaret Coker and Keith Johnson, Bin Laden's

isolation forced an evolution of the al-Qa'ida network into a decentralized group of

offshoots, "popping up in new places with new leaders who, in addition to attempting

high-profile attacks, encouraged their radicalized followers to strike on their own if the

opportunity presented it." These offshoots, known today as the al-Qa'ida Network in

counterterrorism circles, exist throughout the Middle East, Africa, Arabian Peninsula,

South East Asia, and parts of Europe.[8] Mitchell D. Silber, Director of Intelligence

Analysis for the New York City Police Department, in his article published in the

Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel, speaks of the expanding decentralized threat:

> Due to the rise of other important nodes in al-Qa`ida's worldwide network of allies and affiliates, the threat from al-Qa`ida-type terrorism has not ended. Rather, it has devolved into an expanded, diffuse network of affiliates, allies and ideological adherents. Since 2001, the core networked laterally with other like-minded groups on the periphery who were aligned ideologically and formed a loose coalition of allies and affiliates to include al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-i-Tayyiba (LeT), al-Shabab, and al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), among others. Each group serves as a power center, node, or hub that has an informal and loose relationship to al-Qa`ida core. As the core may continue to fade, other nodes in the network will seek to raise their profile and may even surpass the core's ability to project a threat outward against the West.[9]

Al-Qa'ida, the network comprised of loosely affiliated groups of Sunni Islamic

extremists who have sworn allegiance to Osama bin Laden, has expanded its popularity

and ideology by being the number one target and enemy of the United States over the

past ten years. It has grown not only from previous Afghanistan jihadist relationships

fighting against the Soviets in the 1980s but also partly as a result of the U.S. war in

Iraq. Retired General Stanley McChrystal, former International Security Assistance

Force (ISAF) Commander, in his *Foreign Policy* article, describes the al-Qa'ida network

as an organization formed by previous affiliation and status, which is "a constellation of

fighters organized not by rank but on the basis of relationships and acquaintances,

reputation and fame." Some relationships were formed in the prisons of Egypt, Iraq, and

Afghanistan; others from those who trained together in Afghanistan prior to 9/11 and

who had familial ties and tribal relationships that exceeded normal middle-eastern

cultural divides. These relationships formed the nucleus of al-Qa'ida and established the

command structure that would ultimately declare war on the United States. These

relationships combined with al-Qa'ida's initial success in attacking the United States and

other Western European countries fashioned a following among other Sunni – Salafist extremists who viewed the al-Qa'ida ideology and methods as a means to achieve their "local" ends. These local groups eventually swore bayat to al-Qa'ida and its ideology that enabled them to "burnish the al-Qa'ida name" in order to create these offshoots, affiliate organizations, and adherents that now comprise the greater al-Qa'ida Network. In essence, as many counterterrorism professionals will attest, the only way to defeat a living network such as Al-Qa'ida is with a network designed and focused on its destruction. In other words, what is required to defeat the expanding disease of al-Qa'ida is to first contain and continuously attack the members of the network who spread the ideology. This cannot be achieved without the ability to detect, decide, and strike at the speed required to apprehend or eliminate al-Qa'ida leaders or host of this disease; therefore, the U.S. government must establish a network that is more agile and adaptive than our enemy. Simultaneously, the U.S. network should seek a holistic government approach or solution to remedy the effects of this disease (al-Qa'ida) in order to provide better alternatives than the violent al-Qa'ida ideology.[10]

National Objective

The United States National Strategy for Counterterrorism "deliberately uses the word "war" to describe our relentless campaign against al-Qa'ida."[11] As in any strategy a nation must carefully and clearly lay out the desired end state (ends) of the war in order to better align the resources (means) with the methods (ways) for achieving success. Over the past 10 years our strategy and our national objectives have evolved from a High Value Target (HVT) decapitation strategy to a high operational tempo "Whack-A-Mole" strategy to now a more holistic approach to counter not only the operational capabilities of al-Qa'ida but more importantly address their ideology and message. Our

current national strategy for counterterrorism identifies eight overarching goals as the framework for successfully defeating al-Qa'ida and countering the ideology: 1) Protecting the American people, homeland, and American interest; 2) Disrupt, degrade, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents; 3) Prevent terrorist development, acquisition, and use of weapons of mass destruction; 4) Eliminate al-Qa'ida safe havens; 5) Build enduring CT partnerships and capabilities; 6) Degrade links between al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents; 7) Counter al-Qa'ida ideology and its resonance and diminish the specific drivers of violence that al-Qa'ida exploits; and 8) Deprive terrorists of their enabling means.[12] These eight goals translate into our national counterterrorism strategy's objectives (ways) to achieve the United States national end state or ends, the defeat of al-Qa'ida. Each of the goals provide sufficient guidance, flexibility, and intent on what our national counterterrorism network should use to focus talent, resources, and methods in achieving the end state. The 2010 national counterterrorism strategy's goals do, for the first time, attempt to take a holistic approach to defeating al-Qa'ida by not only attacking its network and safe havens, but attempting to attack al-Qa'ida's true center of gravity – its ideology.

This is not to imply that the United States just figured this out, because early in 2006 as the situation was deteriorating in Iraq, the United States realized its decapitation strategy wasn't sufficient to attack and defeat al-Qa'ida's center of gravity. According to Dr. Bruce Hoffman, formerly the Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency at the RAND Corporation, in his February 2006 testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism,

> America's counterterrorism strategy appears predominantly weighted towards a "kill or capture" approach targeting individual bad guys. This line

of attack assumes that America's contemporary enemies--be they al-Qa'ida or the insurgents in Iraq—have a traditional center of gravity…This is a monumental failing not only because decapitation strategies have rarely worked in countering mass mobilization terrorist or insurgent campaigns, but also because al-Qa'ida's ability to continue this struggle is ineluctably predicated on its capacity to attract new recruits and replenish its resources.[13]

Of course, attacking al-Qa'ida's ideology has been the most difficult problem for the United States to take on while devoting tremendous amount of resources to two separate counter-insurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, as the United States has withdrawn from Iraq and is scaling back the effort in Afghanistan, it has the opportunity, despite budget constraints on DOD, to focus all elements of national power in attacking al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, while countering its message and the attraction to its ideology. This was echoed by both the President and Secretary of Defense in their address to the nation on January 4, 2012 referencing the military budget reductions. Both the President and Secretary Panetta argued for and favor reduction in military spending in all areas except those that would contribute to the defeat of Al-Qa'ida. The Secretary of Defense said, "It (NMS) will preserve our ability to conduct the missions we judge most important to protecting core national interest: defeating al-Qa'ida and its affiliates."[14] Given the United States has properly identified the problem, laid out the necessary objectives (eight national goals), and has the opportunity to focus all elements of national power to defeat al-Qa'ida, the question remains: How does the United States re-structure or transform the conglomerate of agencies into a seamless "whole-of-government approach" Network into achieving our national end state(ends)?

Means

Of the 13 departments and agencies contributing to our nation's counterterrorism network, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has the mission to "lead our

nation's effort to combat terrorism at home and abroad by analyzing the threat, sharing

that information with our partners, and integrating all instruments of national power to

ensure unity of effort."[15] Unique among US agencies, NCTC also serves as the primary

organization for strategic operational planning for counterterrorism. Operating under the

policy direction of the President of the United States, the National Security Council, and

the Homeland Security Council, NCTC provides a full-time interagency forum and

process to plan, integrate, assign lead operational roles and responsibilities, and

measure the effectiveness of strategic operational counterterrorism activities of the U.S.

government, applying all instruments of national power to the counterterrorism mission.

A February 2010 internal assessment of the NCTC revealed a systemic impediment to

achieving a whole-of-government approach to counterterrorism with the "overlapping

authorities – real or perceived – resulting in lack of participation by certain departments

and agencies."[16] For example – of the 13 agencies responsible to assist the NCTC in its

counterterrorism mission, 5 agencies claim either to be in the lead or responsible for

integrating the counterterrorism mission.

 The DHS Mission is to lead the unified national effort to secure America in order

to prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and

hazards to the nation. In her April 21, 2010, statement for the record before the U.S.

Senate Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriations, DHS Secretary Janet

Napolitano testified that preventing terrorism and enhancing security was one of the five

core missions of DHS: "Guarding against terrorism was the founding mission of DHS

and remains our top priority today." She further explains that "a key element of

preventing terrorism is recognizing the evolving threats posed by violent extremists and

taking action to ensure our defenses continue to evolve to deter and defeat them."[17] Although DHS's "founding mission" is to prevent terrorism and enhance security, its mission has expanded over the past ten years to include border control, enforcement of immigration laws, cyberspace security, and becoming the lead agency in U.S. disaster relief. Over the past 10 years, the DHS has not only grown in capacity and infrastructure but also in mission and scope. Essentially, DHS's only contribution to the counterterrorism fight has been in the consultation and analytical support it has provided to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces and state-run intelligence fusion centers.

The Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism's primary mission is to develop and lead a worldwide effort to combat terrorism using all the instruments of statecraft: diplomacy, economic power, intelligence, law enforcement, and military. The Bureau of Counterterrorism works with all appropriate elements of the U.S. Government to ensure an integrated and effective counterterrorism effort to defeat al-Qa'ida. The Bureau of Counterterrorism recognizes that for the U.S. to be effective in this fight, it requires an "intimately connected whole-of-government approach" to solve the problem.[18] On a larger scale, the Bureau of Counterterrorism plays a vital role in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) and has implemented a Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) comprised of 30 other nations in order to bring the international community together and assist in the development and execution of a global counterterrorism strategy.[19] Two of the principal challenges in executing the global counterterrorism strategy are getting both the buy-in of every nation, and for each nation to consistently execute the strategy. Due to these

challenges, the Department of State finds itself in a critical role in the war against al-Qa'ida.

Another organization responsible for the global prosecution of the U.S counterterrorism strategy is the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA's war on terror remains a fundamental part of its mission and is primarily planned, resourced, and executed out of its internal Counterterrorism Center (CTC). The CIA's CTC has the mission to coordinate and execute both the operational and analytic components of the "high-stakes war against al-Qa'ida and other terrorists' threats to the United States." The CTC's, as well as the majority of the intelligence community's failures, have been in the sharing of intelligence and integrating operations across multi-government departments and agencies to achieve our national objectives to defeat Al-Qa'ida. Only recently, after much governmental reforms, have the CIA and its CTC been working more efficiently with other US Government agencies and with foreign partners to target these terrorist leaders and cells. Although the CTC is capable of disrupting al-Qa'ida and their terrorist plots abroad, it provides less in terms of countering al-Qa'ida's ideology.[20]

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is an intelligence-driven and a threat-focused national security and law enforcement organization. The mission of the FBI is to protect and defend the United States against terrorist and foreign intelligence threats, to uphold and enforce the criminal laws of the United States, and to provide leadership and criminal justice services to federal, state, municipal, and international agencies and partners. In order to accomplish this mission, the FBI began focusing on developing and resourcing its Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) distributed

throughout the country in every major city. According to the FBI, "JTTFs provide one-stop shopping for information regarding terrorist activities. They enable a shared intelligence base across many agencies."[21] JTFFs have doubled in size since 9/11, are currently located in 103 cities nationwide, and are staffed not only by FBI agents but also analysts and counterterrorism experts from many other federal and local law enforcement agencies. These JTTFs have become the United States' fusion centers designed to integrate operations and intelligence to better protect the homeland and disrupt terrorist plots directed at the United States. Although the JTFFs have had some success and are marked improvements on intelligence sharing between local and federal law enforcement, there is still some room for development. This was amplified in the November 2009 Fort Hood terrorist attack. The Hasan-Fort Hood Investigation revealed that "the specific handling of the Hasan case and systemic disputes between DOD and the FBI concerning JTTFs which remain unresolved, raise concerns that the JTTF model requires additional review…in order for JTTFs to function as effectively as our nation requires."[22] That said, as a government with the growing threat of "home-grown" terrorists, we have to get better at connecting the dots and integrating our operations domestically, while still maintaining the capacity and capability to strike al Qa'ida in its safe havens abroad.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is also involved in the counterterrorism fight. In 2011, DOD updated the Unified Command Plan (UCP), a key strategic document that establishes the missions, responsibilities, and geographic areas of responsibility for commanders of combatant commands. UCP 2011, signed by President Obama on April 6, 2011, assigned several new missions to the combatant commanders. United States

Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was specifically tasked by the UCP to provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests and synchronize planning for global operations against terrorist networks. USSOCOM forces allied with other government agencies' and nation's counterterrorism forces have been doing the majority of the heavy lifting in the war against al-Qa'ida primarily under the direction and operational control of the Joint Special Operations Command, known as JSOC. In fact, an anonymous author and member of USSOCOM argued in a 2009 *Small Wars Journal* article that USSOCOM had become ineffective in the fight and subservient to JSOC: "Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is effectively 'uncontrollable' by USSOCOM because it is superior in every respect to USSOCOM's ability to command. It is a de facto stand-alone direct reporting organization with no need for USSOCOM and has in fact become much more efficient and politically powerful than USSOCOM." Although this might be true in certain respects, what is needed is for USSOCOM to take lead in the interagency fight on the war against al-Qa'ida and leave the operational planning and directing to JSOC.[23]

Additional agencies assisting in the counterterrorism mission include the Department of Justice, Department of Treasury, Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Health and Human Services, and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Essentially what is laid out above are the different agencies that are supposed to share intelligence, operationally integrate, and work as a team in order to achieve the desired end state of our National Security and Counterterrorism strategies. Richard Best, Specialist on National Defense

for the Congressional Research Service, highlighted his findings and concerns to

Congress in his February 2011 review of the National Counterterrorism Center:

> Although intelligence agencies were focused on international terrorism from at least the mid-1980s, the events of September 11, 2001, made counterterrorism a primary mission of the intelligence community. In response to a widespread perception that statutory barriers restricted the flow of information between the CIA and the FBI, Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act (P.L. 107-56) which removed impediments to sharing foreign intelligence and law enforcement information (including grand jury information). The PATRIOT Act was designed to facilitate an all-source intelligence effort against terrorist groups that work both inside and outside U.S. borders. Nevertheless, problems of coordination and institutional rivalries persist.[24]

The U.S. Government's counterterrorism network is designed to wage the war

against al-Qa'ida in the future but, as pointed out, will continue to fail unless some

significant changes are made in its structure, culture, and leadership. As highlighted by

several recent successful and unsuccessful terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, our

counterterrorism team is failing. What is required is for the United States to develop a

robust interagency Counterterrorism Task Force (Network) that integrates all forms of

intelligence and fuses with both an operational and diplomatic arm in order to effectively

execute the war against al-Qa'ida post-withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

Alternatives

President Obama's strategy in the war against al-Qa'ida requires a realignment

of several agencies and significant culture change in order to develop a network that will

defeat al-Qa'ida post-combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The current structure

lacks unity of effort, integration, and ability to draw upon other elements of national

power that will achieve the President's end state – the defeat of al-Qa'ida.

OPTION 1 (Status Quo). Continue with the current decentralized approach to the

CT problem by allowing each agency to gather and analyze intelligence and coordinate,

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develop, and execute unilateral operational strategies that are nested within the National CT Strategy and meet the President's end state. This option allows independent thought and innovative approaches to the complex problem of CT and can be integrated through weekly meetings and working groups. This option is in line with the President's strategy that calls for a multi-departmental and multinational effort to defeat al-Qa'ida.

OPTION 2 (DOD Lead). The Department of Defense arguably has been at the forefront of the war against al-Qa'ida since September 11, 2001. DOD has meticulously and skillfully negotiated the different agency bureaucracies in order to establish a credible CT network that has fused multiple government intelligence agencies with an operational arm. This network has not only proven successful in Iraq and Afghanistan but globally as well in the Horn of Africa, North Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Europe, Syria, and Pakistan. This option uses the current DOD CT network under the control of the Combatant Commanders to disrupt and defeat al-Qa'ida cells in their geographic regions.

OPTION 3 (NCTC Lead). This option would bring the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to the forefront of the war against al-Qa'ida, the leadership role it was envisioned to assume by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, and would represent a new holistic unified approach to achieving the President's end state of defeating al-Qa'ida. In this option, the NCTC would assume control of the DOD (JSOC) network, which has established worldwide operations/intelligence fusion cells focused on the tactical and operational war against al-Qa'ida. This initiative will require a significant paradigm shift in attitude of all supporting government agencies to staff the

NCTC's operations and intelligence center with experienced liaison officers empowered to make decisions. Additionally, the U.S. should increase the NCTC's leadership capability by committing the deputy directors of the CIA, DOS, DOD, DHS and FBI to serve as principal members in the NCTC. This will ensure the appropriate level of leadership is committed to the long-term strategic effort required to leverage and balance the elements of national power in the long war to defeat al-Qa'ida**.**

Analysis

The FAS (Feasible, Acceptable, and Suitable) test is generally used by policy makers and strategists to assist them in analyzing the risk assessment and second or third order effects of a particular policy. The test starts with **feasibility** (Do we have the means to execute this option?). Next is **acceptability** (Is the option in agreement with domestic and congressional norms/attitudes? Is it legal and ethical? Cost?). The final test is **suitability** (Will this option achieve the national objectives?).[25]

Option 1 (Status Quo) is feasible in that it allows for the multi-departmental approach to implement the counterterrorism strategy. The United States has the means to execute this option, but the cost and funding dedicated to each department will vary and affect their means independently. Option 1 is acceptable, in that it is in keeping with traditional U.S. governmental practices and policies and therefore would cause very little friction within the current U.S. counterterrorism structure. Option 1 does provide for a multi-departmental approach to the problem and provides maximum flexibility to interpret and execute the national strategy. Although Option 1 has proven successful in disrupting al-Qa'ida cells and safe havens in the combat zones – Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Horn of Africa; it fails to meet the suitability standard of defeating al-Qa'ida, because it has proven less effective in combating the ideology of al-Qa'ida. In

the past 10-plus years the status quo option has been very successful in the disruption of al-Qa'ida in the capturing or killing of its leaders and network, but it cannot keep pace with al-Qa'ida's ability to regenerate its network. Therefore, a more synchronized and unified multi-departmental approach is required for the U.S. to counter the al-Qa'ida message and ultimately defeat the al-Qa'ida ideology. Additionally, Option 1 is unsuitable because it has proven unsuccessful in preventing attacks on the homeland despite having gained the intelligence of planned operations abroad. In other words, Option 1 fails to adequately connect the dots and prevent future terrorist attacks. In the cases of the Fort Hood – Hasan attack and the 2009 Christmas "underwear" bomber, both had connections to al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), but because of analytical bureaucracies and stove-piped organizational structures, these attacks were not prevented. Richard Best highlighted several concerns in his congressional investigation of the two incidents:

> Arguably most important, however, is the capability of ensuring that analysts are integrated into the counterterrorism effort, that operational planning is shared with analytical offices so that particular reactions or threats can be anticipated and assessed. The most important "wall" may not be the one that existed between law enforcement and intelligence agencies prior to 2001, but the one that often persists between analysts and operators.[26]

Ultimately Option 1 fails because of lack of unity of effort and leadership that integrates the United States counterterrorism structure and expertise into one CT network that has both an integrated analytical effort complementing a global operational arm. The risk is twofold: first, it will not allow for sufficient interagency fusion of intelligence with the different elements of national power that could be leveraged to defeat al-Qa'ida; secondly, the U.S. would give up the initiative in the war against al-

Qa'ida post-Iraq and Afghanistan and, therefore, continue to rely on an active defensive strategy.

Option 2 (DOD Lead), the Department of Defense (DOD), as stated earlier, has been one of the lead proponents of the counterterrorism fight. DOD has built a robust counterterrorism network through USSOCOM based on its Unified Command Plan roles and responsibilities, and including support from other Combatant Commanders and Defense Agencies. This option is feasible in that the United States possess the means to execute this option. Even with a budget-constrained DOD, the United States can continue to execute this option with Predator drones and special operations forces. A counterterrorism strategy such as this would definitely decrease the reaction time operationally and would be very effective in disrupting al-Qa'ida's network. Option 2 is unacceptable within the United States governmental framework, as it would make several intelligence agencies subservient to DOD. This would cause considerable animosity and friction within the CT structure would decrease its effectiveness in the long run. Additionally Option 2 will not have the legitimacy and political support to operate in sensitive environments where other U.S. National interests are at stake. Although Option 2 has been effective in achieving several of the U.S. CT goals, it is not suitable, because it fails to counter al-Qa'ida's ideology and message.

Option 2 vs. Option 1 is better in terms of providing the U.S. with a more time-sensitive capability to act on intelligence when a target or terrorist is identified. However, Option 2 fails to maximize the different elements of national power and, as highlighted in the analysis of Option 1, fails to adequately address the proliferation of al-Qa'ida's ideology. Marc Sageman, a scholar at the New York City Police Department and a

former CIA psychiatrist, argues that the phenomenon of "leaderless jihad -- wherein individuals and groups become radicalized and commit terrorism with no al Qaeda guidance at all has supplanted the relevance of the group itself."[27] It is this leaderless jihad that raises the biggest concern now with many counterterrorism analysts on how the United States will or can effectively combat the Al-Qaida message. Sebastian Gorka agreed with Sageman in his *Foreign Policy* article but argues that the U.S. should "focus less on concepts of democracy and more on the bloody reality that is the result of al-Qa'ida's ideology."[28] Finally, Option 2 would be effective in combating particular cells operating within the Combat Commanders' regions of responsibility but would do very little in integrating the analytical and whole-of-government approach required to counter the Al-Qa'ida ideology and ultimately defeat Al-Qa'ida.

Option 3 (NCTC lead) is feasible in that it provides for unity of effort with a multi-departmental approach to the National CT strategy. Although the different intelligence agencies would have some issues at first, this option is acceptable with domestic and Congressional attitudes and norms. Option 3 provides Congress the ability to "pin the rose" on one department for the management of the national CT strategy. Option 3 vs. Option 2 would provide the U.S. government a seamless transition between detecting terrorist plots abroad and arresting terrorists in the homeland. Option 3 is suitable because of its action arm using JSOC's structure and thus would continue to allow for quick reaction and response to terrorist cells and al-Qa'ida's network. Additionally, Option 3's leadership structure (deputies of all departments) allows for a whole-of-government approach that would synergize the CT strategy and employ all elements of national power to achieve all eight of the United States' CT objectives. This leadership

structure would also contribute to making this option more acceptable than Option 1 and much more effective in countering internal politics and agendas. Option 3's operations and intelligence fusion cell structure, combined with empowered LNOs, would continue to generate the good ideas, concepts, and plans to counter and attack al-Qa'ida's ideology and message.

<u>Proposal</u>

Recommend the selection of Option 3 for NCTC lead. This option is already mandated by Congress and should be used to establish a National Counterterrorism Task Force that integrates and synchronizes the CT tools and capabilities to defeat al-Qa'ida. Gorka argued in 2009 as a result of the announced surge in Afghanistan, "A lead agency must be empowered by the White House, and it must coordinate a whole-of-government message that focuses primarily on the vast number of Muslim victims of terrorism, especially of al Qaeda's brand of terrorism."[29] This whole-of-government approach should be led by a department that is empowered to integrate the intelligence, operations, and strategic message not only to defeat al-Qa'ida, but more importantly counter its message.

Required is a network of CT professionals, charged with the implementation of our national CT strategy and overseeing its execution in the war against Al-Qa'ida. So how does the U.S. government turn this ad hoc, loosely integrated combination of bureaucracies into a decisive, efficient, and seamless counterterrorism network that can produce the kind of results the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency have had the past 10 years? The answer is a paradigm shift in the way our government operates, and a unity of effort and a sense of urgency in Washington for the fight against al-Qa'ida.

The National Strategy For Counterterrorism provides the CT community a strategic vision for the war against al-Qa'ida and specifically calls for a "multi-departmental and multinational effort that goes beyond traditional intelligence, military, and law enforcement functions."[30] The U.S. government has appointed the NCTC as the proponent for this fight once the final troops are pulled out of Iraq and Afghanistan; therefore, what is required is a better understanding by all government agencies of the network of CT professionals currently deployed to defeat al-Qa'ida. This is not something one can do merely through VTC or in the U.S. homeland. Elements and representatives of the different agencies that will form this network are needed to deploy forward and observe their DOD counterparts executing the CT mission. In doing this, the members of the CT network will gain an appreciation for the nature of the fight, the time and energy required, and a better appreciation of the operational tempo required for maintaining pressure on al-Qa'ida. Additionally, the NCTC should observe and assume (at the appropriate junction) JSOC's weekly battle rhythm of interagency VTCs and coordination meetings, as well as develop a training plan for all agencies to establish a common operational picture of both the enemy's and our own CT network. Once the NCTC has the national CT network trained and established, it should immediately assume command and control of the fight against al-Qa'ida. This is a tremendous paradigm shift in the way slow-moving bureaucracies operate but is one that will be required if we are to maintain the initiative against al-Qa'ida and meet the overarching goals of our National Counterterrorism Strategy – our national vision.

The National Strategy For Counterterrorism calls for a "whole-of-government" effort when applying CT tools and capabilities against al-Qa'ida. The blunt military

instrument of JSOC and other counterterrorism forces have proven effective over the past ten years of decapitating and dismantling the network. However, al-Qa'ida has proven resilient and adaptive because the U.S. was not effective in countering al-Qa'ida's ideology and message. This enabled al-Qa'ida to continue to expand and decentralize its network despite continuous disruption caused by U.S. CT forces. That said, a more balanced approach is required, capable of utilizing all elements of national power in the war against al-Qa'ida's ideology. An empowered, unified NCTC would provide the U.S. with this non-military look and serve the long-term effort better when synchronizing DOS, CIA, DHS, DOD, FBI, and other departments/agencies initiatives. Of course, this would prove useless if the NCTC's leadership is not restructured to be more effective in this venture.

This option requires a re-alignment of the deputy secretaries/directors of DOS, DHS, CIA, FBI, and DOD to serve as principal-members of the National CT Task Force under the direction of the NCTC. This dual-hatting of specific deputy directors would ensure strategic leadership talent is working with NCTC to carry out our National CT Strategy to defeat al-Qa'ida. Additionally, this leadership realignment would support, synchronize, integrate, and empower the NCTC to capitalize on all elements of national power to conduct counterterrorism operations and provide strategic vision and synchronization for the long-term fight against al-Qa'ida.

Conclusion

The withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq and Afghanistan requires the United States to restructure and unify the government's counterterrorism efforts under one command. The director of the NCTC has been mandated by Congress to take the lead on integrating not only the intelligence effort but to synchronize and manage the

operational fight in the war against al-Qa'ida. Option 3 (NCTC lead) is feasible,

acceptable, and suitable, in that what is truly required to defeat al-Qa'ida long-term is a

different approach that incorporates and uses all elements of national power to defeat

not only the network but the ideology as well. A NCTC-led government approach

integrated with the leadership talent of other government agencies could prove

influential in addressing the problem within the international community and other nation

states to achieve our national interest. At the same time, the NCTC-led counterterrorism

task force would have the ability to tap into the current DOD/CIA counterterrorism

network capable of working at the speed and flexibility required to defeat al-Qa'ida and

more importantly "connect the dots" of attacks planned and originated abroad but

targeting the homeland. The risk is two-fold: return to the way it was pre-9/11 and wait

for the next attack, or a protracted war against al-Qaida that continues to disrupt the

cells but never achieves our national end state, the defeat of al-Qa'ida.

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